

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3311

INFO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 0296

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, NU

SUBJECT: ELECTIONS 1974: THE GOVERNING LIBERALS

REF: MANAGUA A-05 OF JANUARY 24, 1974

1. ALTHOUGH THE NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY (PLN) HAS DEEP ROOTS, ITS HISTORICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL TRADITIONS HAVE LARGELY BEEN BLURRED DURING ITS FORTY YEARS IN POWER UNDER THE SOMOZAS. TODAY THE PLN IS VIEWED AS AN "OFICIALISTA" PARTY, WHOSE POLICIES AND LEADERS ARE THE SAME AS THOSE OF THE GOVERNMENT. IT IS ALSO REGARDED AS "SOMOCISTA", THE PERSONAL POLITICAL VEHICLE OF THE SOMOZA FAMILY. THE SOMOZAS HAVE FORGED THE PLN INTO A WELL-FINANCED, EFFICIENT AND DISCIPLINED POLITICAL MACHINE THROUGH WHICH GENERAL ANASTASIO SOMOZA TODAY IMPOSES HIS POLITICAL WILL AND GOVERNS NICARAGUA.

2. AT THE TOP OF THE PLN STRUCTURE IS PARTY PRESIDENT, GENERAL ANASTASIO SOMOZA, ASSISTED BY A NATIONAL DIRECTORATE WHICH SERVES

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HIM AS A CONSULTATIVE BODY AND DEALS WITH SUCH MATTERS AS HE MAY

ASSIGN TO IT. ALTHOUGH STRICT PARTY "DISCIPLINE" IS IMPOSED, GENERAL SOMOZA AT TIMES PERMITS A RELATIVELY FREE EXPRESSION OF VIEWS IN THE PRIVACY OF PARTY COUNCILS. AT THE DEPARTMENTAL LEVEL THE PLN STRUCTURE IS HEADED BY "GEOGRAPHIC CACIQUES" WHO IN MANY RESPECTS ARE "LITTLE SOMOZAS" OF THE PROVINCES, ALTHOUGH THEY ARE NOT PERMITTED TO BECOME PROMINENT ENOUGH TO RIVAL SOMOZA. AT THE LOWEST LEVEL ARE LOCAL COUNCILS MANNED BY WARD HEELERS WHO DO THE REAL LEG WORK OF TURNING OUT THE MASSES.

3. THE PLN TREASURY IS CURRENTLY BULGING, WITH ESTIMATES OF ITS SIZE RUNNING AS HIGH AS \$10 MILLION. THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF PARTY FUNDS IS THE "VOLUNTARY" 5 PERCENT CONTRIBUTION AUTOMATICALLY DEDUCTED FROM THE SALARIES OF ALL GON AND AUTONOMOUS ENTITY EMPLOYEES, WHICH NETS APPROXIMATELY \$4 MILLION PER YEAR FOR THE PARTY. PARTY EXPENSES ARE ALSO SIZEABLE, PARTICULARLY DURING A CAMPAIGN WHEN IT STAGES LARGE, COSTLY RALLIES, AND DISPENSES AN EXTENSIVE ARRAY OF "SOCIAL SERVICES." IN ADDITION TO ITS OWN FUNDS, THE PLN HAS PATRONAGE AND OTHER FAVORS OF THE GOVERNMENT AT ITS DISPOSAL.

4. IN ADDITION TO BEING MOBILIZED UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE PLN, GENERAL SOMOZA'S FOLLOWERS BAND TOGETHER IN NUMEROUS POLITICAL SUPPORT GROUPS ORGANIZED ON THE BASIS OF AGE, SEX AND OCCUPATION AT NATIONAL AND DEPARTMENTAL LEVELS. THESE GROUPS ARE SEPARATE ENTITIES INDEPENDENT OF THE REGULAR PLN STRUCTURE BUT ON A DIRECT LINE TO GENERAL SOMOZA. THEY PROVIDE A SUBSTANTIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE POLITICAL POWER OF THE REGULAR PLN MACHINE.

5. COMBINING MONEY, ORGANIZATION AND HARD WORK, IN 1974 THE SOMOZA POLITICAL MACHINE IS EXPECTED TO INSURE A VICTORY FOR THE GENERAL BY EFFECTIVELY ROUNDING UP THE VOTERS, HAULING THEM TO THE POLLS AND GIVING THEM FOOD, DRINK AND SMALL CASH PAYMENTS. AN EXTENSIVE PRE-CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN UNDERWAY FOR THE PAST SIX MONTHS FEATURING PROXY-CAMPAIGNERS WHO KEEP SOMOZA'S NAME AT THE FORE OF PARTY POLITICS. SHORTLY BEFORE THE PLN NATIONAL CONVENTION, SOMOZA IS EXPECTED TO SUBMIT A PRO FORMA RESIGNATION FROM ACTIVE MILITARY DUTY TO ENABLE HIM TO ACCEPT HIS PARTY'S NOMINATION AND TAKE CONTROL OF HIS OWN CAMPAIGN.

6. U.S. INTEREST: THE GENERAL USG INTEREST IN THE DEMOCRATIC
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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF NICARAGUA AND OUR SUBSTANTIAL COMMITMENT TO ITS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT CAUSE US TO BE CONCERNED THAT THE CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS IN 1974 AND SUBSEQUENT TRANSFER OF THE PRESIDENCY BE NOT ONLY PEACEFUL BUT ALSO CONSIDERED TO BE AS LEGITIMATE AS POSSIBLE. THE PERFORMANCE OF THE PLN AND THE SOMOCISTA SUPPORT GROUPS CAN SIGNIFICANTLY AFFECT BOTH THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL IMAGE OF THE NICARAGUAN ELECTORAL PROCESS AND GENERAL SOMOZA'S FUTURE PRESIDENCY. ACCORDINGLY, THE EMBASSY

WILL ENCOURAGE GENERAL SOMOZA TO BE MINDFUL OF THIS AND URGE HIM TO EXERCISE STRICT CONTROL OVER HIS POLITICAL CAMPAIGN TO ASSURE THAT ABUSES WHICH MIGHT DISCREDIT THE ELECTION ARE NOT COMMITTED.

7. THE FOREGOING SUMMARIZES A DETAILED ANALYSIS OF THE "GOVERNING LIBERAL PARTY" CONTAINED IN EMBASSY AIRGRAM A-05 DATED JANUARY 24, 1974.

SHELTON

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